

# Sentinel Trail Guide

## Fort Spokane



Lake Roosevelt  
National Recreation Area

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

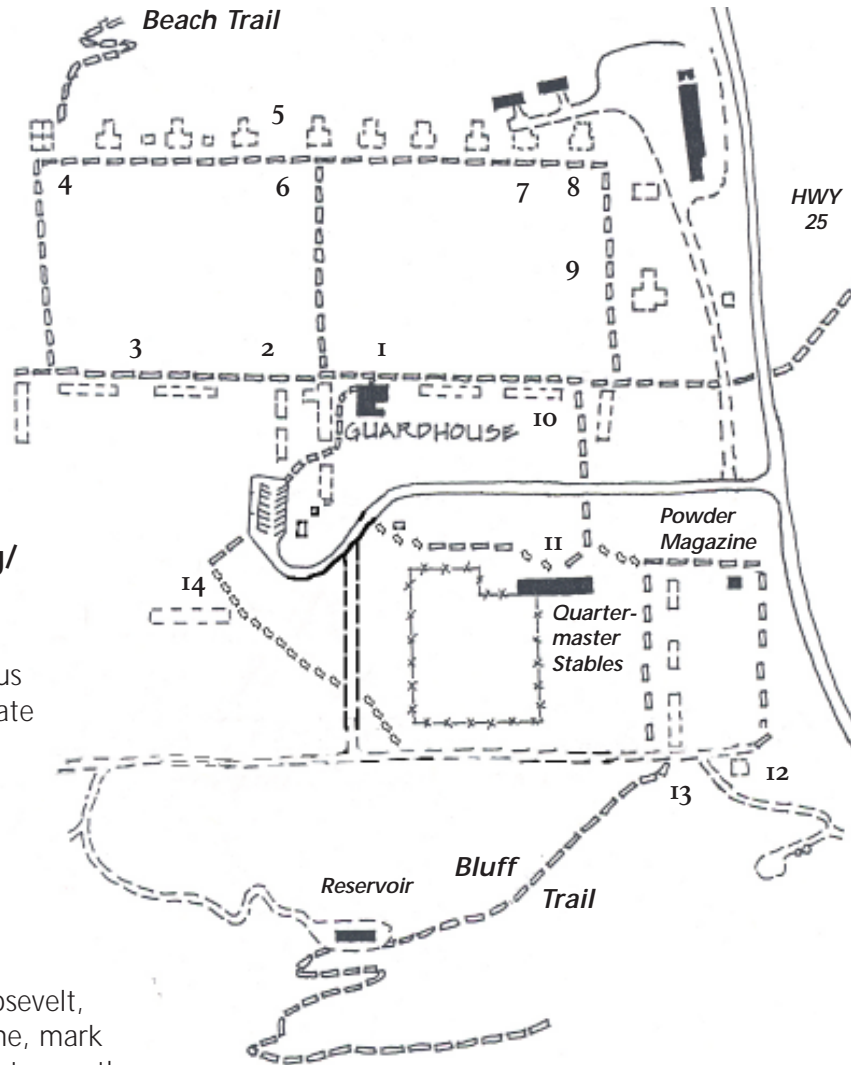
## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Sentinel Trail is edged with wooden rails and marked with numbered stops. Each stop is shown on the map. To learn more about the stops read the corresponding information in this guide. The first stop is located at the Guardhouse, the brick building on the path from the parking lot area.

### Fort Spokane hiking/ walking trails:

**Sentinel Trail** – Easy  
**Bluff Trail** – Strenuous  
**Beach Trail** – Moderate

- Feel free to enter any of the remaining buildings if they are open. Please do not climb on building foundations.
- Areas along Lake Roosevelt, including Fort Spokane, mark the transition zone between the shrub-steppe desert and the wetter ponderosa pine forest communities of the north. When walking or hiking remember to take water with you.
- The Northern Pacific Rattlesnake, while timid and rare, is found in the Fort Spokane area. For your safety stay on the trail and watch carefully where you walk.
- DO NOT remove any objects and or native plants from the grounds. They are protected. It is a felony to collect artifacts or remove vegetation within Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, including Fort Spokane.



## Welcome to Fort Spokane

Walking the **Sentinel** trail is to walk in the footsteps of change. For thousands of years people have been drawn to the confluence of the Spokane and Columbia Rivers. Indian tribes first gathered here from as far away as Canada during the summer to fish the rivers that swelled with spawning salmon. Fur traders came to barter their goods for the hides trapped by the Indian hunters. Soldiers of the United States Army eventually built a fort here to protect both the rights of the local tribes and the wave of white settlers who were moving into the area.

**Sentinel** - a soldier standing guard.



*Overview of Fort Spokane. NPS Archive*

The Sentinel Trail Guide tells the changing story of Fort Spokane and the controversial history of United States Federal Indian Policy. Built in 1880, Fort Spokane served as a frontier military post until the troops were transferred to Cuba to fight in the Spanish-American War in 1898. Government officials who ran the Colville and Spokane Indian Agencies then took over the fort and by 1900 it became the Fort Spokane Indian Boarding School. Teachers, clergy and Indian children came to live here. The last people to occupy the fort were the doctors, nurses and patients of the Tuberculosis Hospital and Sanitarium that served the tribes of the area starting in 1910 until Fort Spokane's final closure in 1929.

Fort Spokane is an example of America's quest to fulfill its policy of manifest destiny. It is the story of how Americans advanced into the west. It is a story of Indians, soldiers, children and settlers, but most of all it's a story of change. With this guide you will follow two stories; the fort as a military post and the fort as an Indian Boarding school. As you walk the trail we encourage you to discover the stories of the people who have come before you and shaped the history of this special place.

***The first stop is located in front of the Guardhouse.***

## **STOP #1 The Guardhouse**

### **Punishment! Discipline! Obedience! Control! Duty! Submission!**

To both soldiers and students alike the guardhouse was an ominous reminder of the consequences of their actions.

### **Soldiers' Story**

Many soldiers at Fort Spokane had joined the Army hoping to see fighting on the frontier. The fight against boredom, however, was the only battle Fort Spokane soldiers waged. Life at the fort was monotonous—every day was the same: wake to the bugle call, eat breakfast, march the Parade Ground, work in the bakery or stand guard at the Guardhouse, march and drill the manual of arms in the afternoon, play baseball in the evenings if the weather was nice, eat dinner and go to bed. These tedious days sometimes got the better of soldiers. Disillusioned by the dull routine and isolation, some soldiers ran away from the fort while others used alcohol to alleviate the problem. Court-martial was the consequence for the captured runaway and the insubordinate drunk soldier. The guardhouse, originally built to house prisoners of war, ironically housed the soldiers themselves who had abandoned their duty or were not obedient to the officers.



*Guardhouse in winter. NPS Archive*

#### **Fort Facts - Guardhouse**

- Current brick guardhouse built 1892 to replace the earlier wood one.
- One of four buildings that remain of the original 45 structures built by the military.
- During the Boarding School era the Guardhouse was used as a bathhouse and sewing room as well as a place of confinement.
- Broken bottles were mixed into the cement floors to prevent prisoners from digging their way to freedom.
- You can see graffiti in one of the solitary confinement cells which may have been left by unhappy soldiers or children.

## Students' Story

Children ages 5 to 16 from the Spokane and Colville tribes were removed from their families and shipped miles away from their homes to the Indian Boarding School at Fort Spokane. They did not understand the language of the teachers and staff, yet were not

*Wellpinit, Wash.*

*April 6, 1900*

*Mr. A.M. Anderson,*

*Dear Sir:*

*Mr. John Solomon wishes me to write to you asking if his daughter, Annie might be permitted to leave school and return to her home. He and his wife have both cried very much on account of her absence from home.*

*I tried to persuade him that she had better remain in school and learn to read and that she would not be there very long before vacation but not having an interpreter I fear I did not make him understand, so according to his request I write this to you.*

*Yours very respectfully,  
B.R. Allen*

*P.S. He understands that his daughter is anxious to return to her home.*

allowed to speak their native language, nor wear their native clothing or practice their spiritual traditions. It was a completely foreign world for them. Understandably many children found it a difficult change. Some tried to run away from the strict discipline and harsh punishments and return to their homes and families. These attempts were almost always in vain. The four Indian Policemen under the jurisdiction of the Indian Agent Albert Anderson would track the children down on horseback and return them to the school. Once back at Fort Spokane, the children would spend several days in one of the tiny cells at the back of the Guardhouse to think about whether it "paid or not."

***Leaving the Guardhouse, proceed to your left on the trail. Look to your left for the Administration building sign.***

## **STOP #2 The Administration Building**

### Soldiers' Story

The Administration Building was the command center of the fort, housing the offices for post Commander, Quartermaster, the Commissary and the telegraph office upstairs. Along with the fort commander, most of the officers worked here. The telegraph line was Fort Spokane's connection to the outside world. It terminated in Spokane where a signal sergeant would relay messages over other lines running to the Vancouver Barracks and Fort Sherman.



## Students' Story

The Indian Boarding school Superintendent kept his offices here at the Administration building and it also served as the Assembly Hall and living quarters for the older schoolboys. Older children shared semiprivate rooms with two or three others, while the younger children were housed in the barracks.

### **Fort Facts – Administration Building**

- Telegraph lines were erected at the fort in 1881.
- Built in 1883 and considered modern for the time.



*Administration building in winter. NPS Archive*

***Continue along the path to the Company E sign.***

## **STOP #3 The Barracks**

### Soldiers' Story

After a long day of marching, target practice, or construction detail soldiers wanted a place to relax. The three barracks buildings that lined the boardwalks on this side of the post were just the place. From 1884 to 1898 the barracks were home to 60 enlisted men each. The second floor was one huge room with beds lined up against both walls and did not offer much privacy. Footlockers at the foot of the beds stored personal items and the aisle between the beds had a few tables, some wood-burning stoves and gun racks for all of the rifles in the company. To keep the men entertained the barracks also included a gymnasium for recreation and a library that boasted a large selection of magazines from all over the country.



*Interior view of barracks. NPS Archive*

## Students' Story

If a student was lucky enough to have a sibling at school they might have been comforted in knowing a family member was with them. However, if they were not close in age or the same gender, the children would be separated yet again from the security of family. The younger Indian students were housed in two of the three barracks buildings. One building



*Barracks in winter. NPS Archive*

was for the small girls and the other for the small boys. The building in the center became the school's kitchen and dining hall. Just like the soldiers who came before them, the children slept in beds lined along the wall. There were shelves for their meager possessions including the uniforms and long dresses issued to them upon their arrival.

***Follow the trail to your right towards the Bachelor Officers' Quarters.***

### **STOP #4 Bachelor Officers' Quarters**

## Soldiers' Story

Officers led different lives from the enlisted men though they lived just across the parade ground from each other. Officers were of a higher status and therefore were given luxuries the enlisted men weren't given and couldn't afford.

Bachelor officers did not have wives or families, so they were housed in the dormitory-like Bachelor Officers' Quarters (BOQ). Unlike the enlisted men however, officers had privacy. The BOQ was large enough to allow each officer to have his own room and while enlisted men used "privy vaults" the officers had indoor plumbing. They also were able to afford to household staff such as Chinese cooks and laundresses. A landscaped yard and a picket fence gave the officers a few touches of home the enlisted men didn't receive.



*"Yesterday, the sheriff arrested all the Chinamen in the post for refusing to pay their poll tax and consequently some of the unmarried officers are in a great fix and have to do their own cooking. In this country where help is scarce the Chinamen do all the work, cooking, washing and so on and they generally got about \$40.00 a month..." Garrison Life as told by a soldier—Fort Spokane, Washington Territory. April 27, 1892*

## Students' Story

The older girls of the boarding school would return here after a long day of school work and chores. The regimen of class and the afternoons dedicated to learning how to keep house was new and different to them.



### **Fort Facts –Bachelor Officers' Quarters**

- Built in 1887.
- In the early 1900s the government instituted healthcare programs for Indians. In 1920, after the school's closure, the Bachelor Officers Quarters became a tuberculosis sanitarium and Indian hospital. Children from local day schools who became infected were cared for here. They were able to continue their education until such time as they were healthy enough to return to their homes. Later, ill adults were also admitted.

***Proceed down Officers' Row to the junction of the trail with the next set of signs.***





*Commanding Officer's Quarters. NPS Archive*

## **STOP #5 The Commanding Officer's Quarters**

The Commanding Officer's Quarters housed the post commander and his family during the military occupation of the fort and the superintendent and his family during the boarding school era. As the most prominent home on the grounds it contained the finest furnishings at the fort.

## **The Commander and Chief Joseph: Allies on the River**

Fort Spokane was established to act as a buffer between the Indian reservation and the white settlers. The Army was there to protect the rights of the Indians on the reservation. When Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce were relocated to the Colville Reservation, the army came to their aid.

In June 1885, after being exiled in Oklahoma, Chief Joseph and his followers were moved to the Colville Reservation. They spent their first winter on the Reservation across the Columbia River from Fort Spokane. The Nez Perce arrived without supplies or means to secure them until the next spring. The salmon run was over for the season and the Indian Bureau in Washington had reduced their food rations to only one days worth of food for every seven days.

In August the military intervened by issuing army rations to the Nez Perce to prevent their starvation. By November the situation had become critical and Lieutenant Colonel J. S. Fletcher, who had replaced Colonel H. G. Merriman as commander of the Fort, wrote to both the Assistant Adjutant General and Indian Agent Moore complaining of the situation.

"All these Indians are now very destitute of clothing, blankets, and tentage and should be supplied with these articles at once or they will suffer during the winter. As far as I am informed no steps have been taken by the Indian Department to procure these articles for them." Fletcher then ordered Indian Service Farmer Alex Shannon to issue full rations to the band, saving the Nez Perce from starvation that winter.



*Chief Joseph. NPS Archive*

***Behind you and to your left is stop #6.***

## STOP #6 Baseball at Fort Spokane

### Soldiers' Story

Baseball provided a much needed diversion from the drudgery of military life for the men at Fort Spokane. The enlisted men of the Fort formed teams and played against civilians from the surrounding areas. The local papers often carried stories of the "Boys in Blue". On June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1894, the Davenport Times wrote, "The contest of the season will be played between the Fort Spokane boys and the Davenport Baseball Club on the latter's ground, Sunday. The Fort players are considered the most skilled in the country." The game ended in defeat for the Boys in Blue.



*Fort Spokane Baseball Club. NPS Archive*



*Boarding School baseball team. NPS Archive*

### Students' Story

Sports have always been a large part of Indian Culture, and the children at the Fort Spokane Boarding School were no exception. Baseball and other games occupied a large portion of the children's free time. One account states that the Boarding School baseball team only lost three games over a two year period.

*Continue on the trail down Officers Row to stop #7.*

## STOP #7 Parade Grounds

### Soldiers' Story

In the 1870s after the Army's unexpected defeat at the battle of Little Big Horn the Commanding General of the Army, General William Sherman called for reform. He demanded more discipline and drills so troops in **garrison** had a heavy schedule of drills, roll calls, parades, details and training sessions. Dress parades were held as often as three times a

week during the summer. Ironically, the soldiers stationed at Fort Spokane never once fired a gun in battle.

**Garrison** - troops stationed at a military installation.

As you look across these grounds, imagine the activity of soldiers drilling and marching. Indians were part of that activity. The army first used Indian Scouts during the Civil War. Using their knowledge of the geography and Indian languages they guided the army troops. The Army also believed that Indians fighting other Indians from the same tribe was very demoralizing. At Fort Spokane, two Indian Scouts were hired in March of 1884. Between 1886 and 1891 the number of Scouts varied between five and ten men. In 1891, scouts were no longer used and Indians became enlisted as regular soldiers. One of the ways the government tried to fulfill its perceived obligation of "civilizing" the Indians was by trying to assimilate them into the regular army. It was also thought that Indians would be an abundant source of soldiers. Thus on many military posts Company I, standing for Indian, came into existence.

## Students' Story



*Students on the Parade Grounds. NPS Archive*

The children of the school were often trained similar to the soldiers they replaced. Like soldiers, their lives were now about following orders and adhering to the strict rules. No longer allowed to wear their native clothing, boys were dressed in military style uniforms and the girls were issued long dresses to wear. Inspections occurred on the parade grounds where the

children lined up with military precision and were made to march in straight columns when going from one building to another on the grounds.

***Proceed down Officers' Row to where the trail turns right.***

## STOP #8 Officers' Row

You have just walked along Officers' Row that lined this side of the parade grounds. Most of the officers lived in five "double sets" or duplexes here while higher-ranking officers occupied four single dwellings. The Commanding Officer's quarters was the most elaborate of these. Behind the houses were woodsheds and the quarters for the Chinese servants employed by the officers.



*Officers' Row House. NPS Archive*

The Officers' Quarters later became the offices for the Indian Agency, as well as the homes of the Boarding School employees.

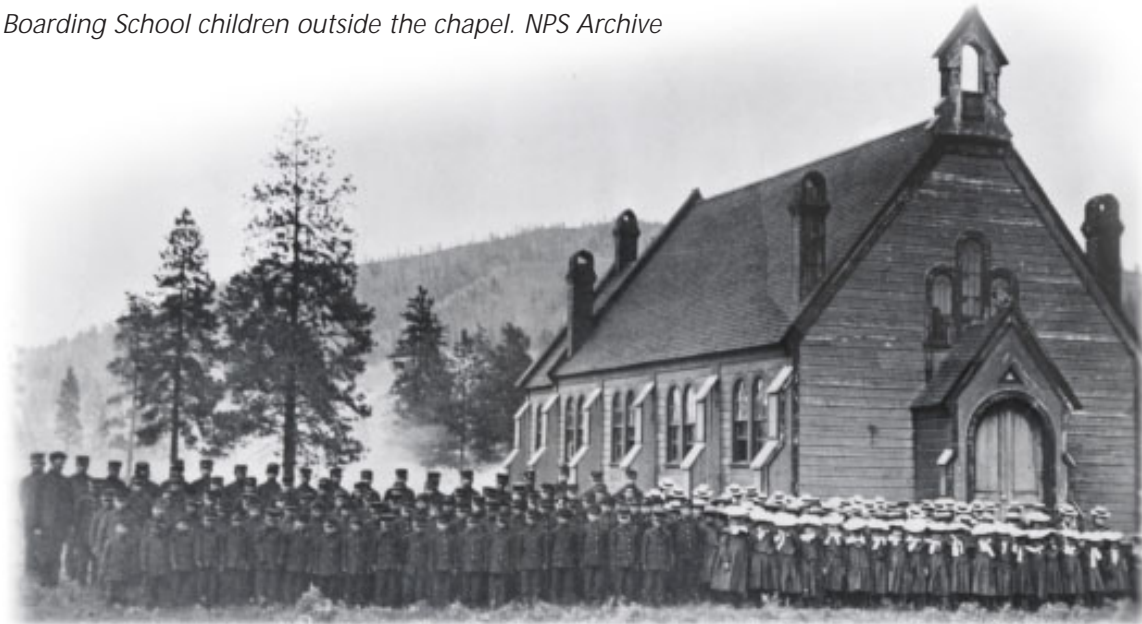
*Continue to the right to stop #9.*

## STOP #9 The Chapel / School House

The chapel was a place of worship for Protestants and Catholics alike. Services were held each Sunday, with Sunday school classes for the children of the officers and non-commissioned officers. During the week the building served as a classroom for these same children. It was also used for the enlisted men, many of whom were illiterate when they joined the Army. Some of the officers' wives taught evening reading and writing classes to them in the chapel.

The Chapel fell into disrepair and was not used during the Boarding School era.

*Boarding School children outside the chapel. NPS Archive*



***Continue down the trail and turn right at the junction. At the next junction turn left and proceed to stop #10.***

### **STOP #10 Barracks/ School House**

The barracks here later served as the hospital for the children and staff of the Boarding School. Dr. A.D. Snyder ran the hospital at the school and attended to emergencies on the Colville Reservation. He was quoted in the Spokane Chronicle as saying: " One of the odd features in treating the Indians is that they always make heroic efforts to come to the physicians, rather than to stay at home and have the physician come to them. I know of repeated cases where they were suffering from fevers or pneumonia and would get within 10 or 15 miles of my office before giving out from illness or exhaustion.... Many of the Indians have tuberculosis or scrofula, a disease often related to tuberculosis."

**Tuberculosis** - also known as consumption, is a virus that killed hundreds of thousands of people in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Symptoms include a persistent cough that sometimes produces blood, chest pains, breathlessness, night sweats and signs of pneumonia.

***Follow the trail across the road toward the quartermaster's stables and proceed to stop 11.***



## STOP #11 The Quartermaster's Stables

If you had come to this area during the military's occupation, you would have heard the sounds of metal being pounded into tools in the Quartermaster (Blacksmith) Shop to your left. From the right would have come the sounds of mules in the Quartermaster's stables. During the Boarding School years, you would have heard many of the same sounds, with the addition of horses, cows, chickens, and other farmyard animals.

*"Across the campus the boys were also being detailed to their work for the week. Some were sent to the garden, if at the right time of the year, where potatoes, corn, tomatoes and other vegetables grew. Others were detailed to milk and care for the cows, feed the pigs and chickens and look after the horses, besides doing other chores. There was a large barn on the place, and the boys learned a lot about farming on a small scale. Most of the boys lived on small farms at home, so this training would not come amiss: but for boys who had ambition to become something else, Fort Spokane was far from being adequate, for it was only a grade school."--Frances LeBret, Teacher Boarding School*

***Follow the trail to the Powder Magazine and continue to stop #12.***

## STOP #12 The Sawmill

The buzz of the sawmill blades and the thunder and hiss of the steam engine that powered it were constant sounds at Fort Spokane. All of the lumber to build the fort came from the plentiful trees that grew on the cool, moist, north-facing slope you are standing next to- stripping it almost completely bare. The last 100 years has seen the return of the forest on this hillside, showing us one of the resources the military was attracted to in 1880.

Young boys at the School were sent here, as well as the blacksmith's shop, to learn a trade. It was a long held misconception at the time that Indians were unsuited for higher education and were best served by being taught vocational skills that would help them find employment away from the reservation and its "barbarous influence."



*Fort Spokane sawmill. NPS Archive*

***Continue along the trail to stop #13.***

### **STOP #13 Trail to the Parking Lot or the Bluff**

From here you can decide if you wish to continue directly back to the Guardhouse or continue on along the Bluff Trail. The trail will take approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour to complete round trip. Wayside exhibits on the bluff discuss the area's unique landscape and the dramatic changes in the Spokane and Columbia rivers. The trail also offers an excellent overview of Fort Spokane as a whole.

***This trail guide continues on to stop #14 and the self-guided tour can be resumed after your return from the bluff.***

### **STOP #14 The Orchard**

Today, you have seen many of the changes that occurred at Fort Spokane. Changes that reflect the United States Federal Indian Policy that took place throughout the country and dictated the systematic destruction of Indian culture. At a time when the government did not recognize the value of Indian cultures the belief was that different ways of life could not coexist and that the integration of Indians into white society was the only solution. Forcing people from their traditional homelands and breaking up families by sending children to boarding schools was determined to be the most efficient way to accomplish this. The government did not see the heartbreaking emotional cost to either the thousands of Indian children who attended the boarding schools or their descendants. The National Park Service maintains the grounds at Fort Spokane to preserve these stories for future generations.



*Members of the Salish tribe, 1883.  
NPS Archive*

***If you do not wish to keep this trail guide, please return it to the holder on the bulletin board at the parking lot. Thank you for visiting Fort Spokane.***